

representatives of those groups came down and testified, and the memo that Senator Johnson and I are distributing has set out the people that testified in favor of this bill, and I would encourage you to read that list so you can see the groups that are represented. We are denying the constituencies represented by those witnesses of this legislation that they want to make the statement that they think needs to be made to protect the synagogues and churches in this state. Now I think that generally we need to strive for uniformity in our statutes. I don't quarrel with Senator Beutler over that. But I think it is entirely legitimate to make exceptions from time to time when a particular problem comes along, particularly a problem that has the implications and the thrust of denying people their right to practice the religion that they want to practice in this nation and the way they want to practice it. And after all freedom of religion is one of our most important of all constitutional rights. This country is populated by the descendants of people that came to the shores of this land originally in many cases to escape religious persecution. We continue to see some vestiges of religious persecution even in the 1980s, anti-Semitic activity, anti-Catholic activity. I think it is important for us to take this opportunity to say that we here in Nebraska don't approve of that, and that in this narrow context we can yield to the strict laws of uniformity to pass a law of this kind. So I would ask you to reject the committee amendments, to restate the original language of the bill which is for special protections, even though they are not significant or not particularly major, they are nonetheless special protections for synagogues and churches and cemeteries so that we can make this political statement in this body during this session. Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. We are discussing the committee amendments to this bill, and the next to be recognized is Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, I oppose this bill and I even spoke against it before the committee. But I think there is a principle involved and this bill is unique in the way it addresses the subject and the subject that it addresses. I think that the action by the committee in amending it as it did was improper, not in the sense of being beyond the committee's authority or legal power, or whatever, but based on the way the bill was presented, the arguments of those who supported the bill to bring it to the Legislature in this form completely circumvents the purpose of the bill. If we are going to vote on this matter, I don't think we ought to try to circumvent it or pussyfoot around it by hiding behind keeping what we call